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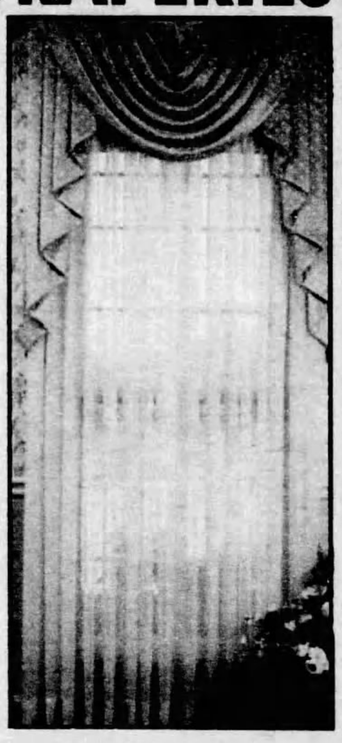

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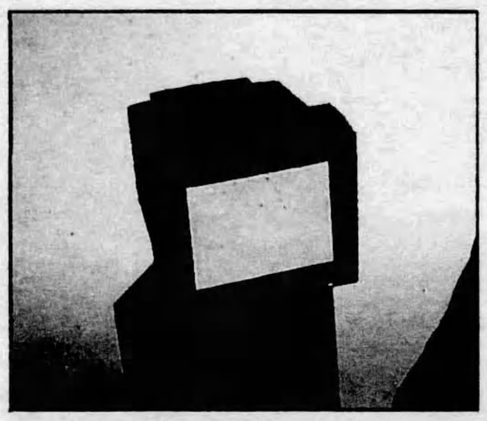
CONTENTS January 5, 1992

Features

Computer Hackers
Have We Seen The Last Of These Cyberpunks, Phreakers And Techno-Hippies?

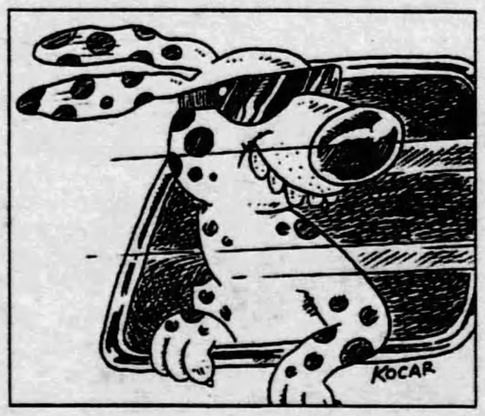


BY MICHAEL HEATON
Page 8

Going For The Gold
Figure Skater Jill Trenary Wants One More Chance At The Olympics

BY DENNIS MANOLOFF
Page 14

Departments



OPENERS Page 4
LETTERS Page 6
FOOD Page 16
PUZZLE Page 18

Cover photo by Roadell Hickman

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From The Editor

Whatever happened to privacy? As if it wasn't bad enough having a paper trail of court records, bank records, loan applications, tax forms, and God knows what else, stretching from here to Omaha, now most of it has been switched over to computers. And, in this age of the diskette, in this log-on log-off, technoid world, wouldn't you know that the next thing out of the box, after the disk drive, terminal and keyboard, would be rampant paranoia.

Why?

Because, computer nerds — either the after-school or corporate-espionage variety — are capable of breaking into practically any system, practically any time. Want to eradicate your Visa balance? *Bip*, it's done. Want to end those nasty phone calls from Al's Collection Agency? *Bip*. Want to change that D in "ENG 203: Shakespeare — Brilliant, Or Just Another Dead British Guy?" that messed up your grade-point average and sullied your college transcripts? *Bip*. It's an A. And you didn't even have to buy the Cliffs Notes.

To examine this frightening phenomenon, which has already risen and fallen a few times since the dawn of the disk, The Magazine sent staff writer Michael Heaton into the electronic arena (page 8). Once he was hooked up, he found some local hackers, who practice such things as "phone phreaking" and "social engineering," and they showed him how to enter systems.

"We got in instantly," says Heaton, "because the places they broke into were pre-hacked accounts that they had already spent long hours trying to get into — what they call 'brute-force hacking.' They said that the first thing a hacker learns is that the security systems of major computer systems are appallingly bad."

Great. Very reassuring.

I think I'd feel a whole lot better if the records attached to my name were lost in some dark, dusty room, stuffed inside a rusty filing cabinet that reeked of spilled coffee and White-Out. With a drawer that had never been on the right track and made fingernails-on-the-blackboard kinds of noises every time it was opened. Break into that, modem marauders!

— Clint O'Connor

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